

# Prospects and Opportunities for Achieving the MDGs in Post-conflict Countries: A Case Study of Sierra Leone and Liberia

3 April 2005

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## Abstract

In this paper we examine the strategies being employed by post-conflict countries in Africa to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We argue that to attain these goals, these countries will need to alter the way they undertake development planning. Rather than design strategies to achieve best outcomes with limited resources, reaching the MDGs will require that governments identify what resources are needed in order to meet the agreed ambitious objectives. In post conflict circumstances, as evident in Liberia and Sierra Leone (the two countries we examine), three particular challenges to achieving the goals stand out: a history of economic reversals, extremely weak institutional capacity, and popular distrust of government. We argue that rather than treat these features as a limiting factor on development, they should be integrated within development strategies, by including them among the needs to be met as part of an MDG strategy and by adopting strategies that draw on considerably more ambitious models of consultation, information dissemination and transparency than are presently being employed.

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## 1 Introduction

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are quantified targets for reducing human poverty by specific dates, mostly by 2015. Consistent with the principles of NEPAD, the goals presuppose a partnership: the goals themselves derive from an agreement and commitment by all countries, articulated in September 2000 during the United Nations Millennium Summit, to a common set of principles and targets that would bring a large share of the poorest people up to a minimum acceptable standard of human development by the year 2015.

None of the Millennium Development Goals responds directly to the problem of violent conflict. But violent conflict is closely related to all of the goals, and the need to take account of the impacts of conflict within strategies to achieve the goals has been explicitly recognized by the United Nations Millennium Project. Achieving the Millennium Development goals is rendered especially difficult in countries affected by conflict. A history of conflict presents these countries with a double challenge: first, because of the adverse developmental effects of conflict, to meet the goals these countries typically have to make much greater gains within a much shorter period than do other countries; second, because the security concerns induced by conflict endure, the choices of development policies need to take account of security concerns arising from development initiatives to a greater degree than elsewhere.

Conflict affects the achievement of all of the MDGs.<sup>i</sup> But the adverse developmental effects of conflict also continue well *after* conflict formally ends.<sup>ii</sup> In the aftermath of civil conflicts, large investments are typically needed to rehabilitate refugee populations, internally displaced people and former combat troops. Large investments are also required to rebuild basic infrastructure such as roads, electricity, schools and hospitals.

But just at the moment when massive investments are needed, post-conflict governments are often in an especially weak position to spend money efficiently.

For these reasons, a comprehensive strategy for achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Africa will require a recognition of the special needs of countries in conflict. To this end, the present research assesses the state of the MDGs in two of the most severely affected countries in Africa: Sierra Leone and Liberia. The two countries not only exemplify many of the problems faced by African countries recovering from conflict, but are also usefully contrasted. In Sierra Leone, the legitimacy of the post-conflict administration has been established by two electoral contests. The current government is committed to a continuation of the democratic process, and could set an ambitious agenda for addressing MDG targets without courting controversy.

Liberia, on the other hand, is administered by a caretaker interim body, the National Transitional Government (NTGL) pending elections scheduled for October 2005. The NTGL comprises representatives of factions that have fought three successive wars, as well as civilian representatives, and any far-reaching policy initiative risks stirring up inter-factional controversy.

We proceed as follows. In the next section we provide an analysis of the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone and of the impacts of the conflicts on development outcomes. We emphasize in this analysis the role of the weakness of the state and the alienation of rural populations from the state. In the third section we give an overview of post-conflict development planning in the two countries, raising some concerns about the approach used to development planning and in particular the lack of a full integration of security concerns into development planning. The bottom line is that these states still face security threats and do not have well developed long term economic strategies, but that at present they simply do not have the financial, institutional or human capacity to turn the situation around. Based on this analysis, we then suggest a series of proposals for better incorporating the specific needs of post conflict countries in development planning. One set of proposals describes a different approach to development planning than is now being used, one that integrates a rights-based approach to development and that also treats planning more like developing a business plan. In these cases, strengthening state capacity is part of the solution. Another set of proposals addresses the problem of alienation and frustrations of populations, which, we argue, were contributing factors to conflict in the first place and which remain largely unaddressed. These include suggestions for better incorporating rural citizens into decision-making processes, and using information and planning strategies that help tackle horizontal inequalities within these countries. We conclude with recommendations for how NEPAD can contribute to this process, suggesting that NEPAD could usefully assist countries by providing institutional support for policy planning and an auditing function that helps to signal to development partners whether post-conflict countries have developed implementable development strategies that adequately address their security concerns.

## **2 The conflicts**

### **2.1 Histories of conflict in Liberia and Sierra Leone**

The civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone (the Mano River conflicts, named after the river forming the border between the two countries) have intertwined histories. Most authorities trace the beginnings of the civil war in Liberia to the coup of Samuel Doe and Thomas Quiwonkpa against the True Whig Party regime of William Tolbert in 1980. The initial alliance between Doe (a Krahn) and Quiwonkpa (a Gio) soon collapsed, opening an ethnic split in the army.

Quiwonkpa was killed by Doe after a coup attempt in 1985 and there were reprisals by the army in Nimba County where Quiwonkpa drew most support. President Houphouët-Boigny in Côte d'Ivoire was an ally of the Tolbert regime, and permitted anti-Doe activists to mobilise in Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. The National Patriotic Front of Liberia, ultimately led by a renegade Doe loyalist, Charles Taylor, undertook guerrilla training in Libya and launched an incursion into Nimba County at Christmas 1989. The NPFL quickly took over about 90% of Liberia, but was prevented from seizing Monrovia by the intervention of a Nigerian-dominated regional peace-keeping force, ECOMOG.

With the war stalemated in 1991, Taylor turned his attention to helping an allied group of Libyan trained rebels, the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone to launch a cross-border incursion into eastern and southern Sierra Leone (Kailahun and Pujehun Districts), seeking to destabilise Sierra Leone, a staunch supporter of the Nigerian-backed ECOMOG. The RUF sought to overthrow the northern-dominated All People's Congress, the sole legal political party in power since 1968. The RUF received initial support from groups along the Liberian border, long alienated from the Freetown regime. Meanwhile, the APC government under President Momoh had encouraged and helped arm a Freetown-based anti-Taylor militia, ULIMO, recruited from among Krahn-speakers originating in Grand Gedeh County and members of the Mandingo merchant classes (Liberians of Guinean extraction, and among Doe's important business partners). This new force (ULIMO) helped the Sierra Leonean army push back the RUF towards the Liberian border, and then carried on into Liberia, hitting back at Taylor forces. Liberia descended into further chaos when both the NPFL and ULIMO splintered. At one stage the countryside was contested by as many as eight armed factions, with ECOMOG holding greater Monrovia, an area administered by an interim civilian regime.

In Freetown a military coup overthrew the Momoh regime in 1992, but greatly under-estimated RUF determination to continue a guerrilla insurgency from bases secretly established in a network of forest reserves fanning out from the eastern border. Downplaying the RUF threat the military regime found itself facing civilian anger at the continuing violence in the countryside. This anger sustained pressure culminating in elections in February and March 1996. The outgoing military had earlier set up a peace negotiation with the RUF and this was continued by the incoming government of President Kabbah. But the search for peace was complicated by the presence in the country of private security forces staffed by members of the former South African Defence Forces, interested as much in mineral concessions as peace. Persuading the new government that the RUF was insincere about peace the South Africans undertook operations against rebel positions even as negotiations took place in Côte d'Ivoire (Hooper 2002). These operations weakened the RUF command structure, and the Abidjan peace agreement soon fell apart. A military coup temporarily displaced the elected government in 1997, but the legitimate government was restored by ECOMOG intervention in 1998. ECOMOG was able to transfer from Liberia to Sierra Leone since the war in Liberia was temporarily ended by an election which made Charles Taylor president in 1997. With Taylor's assistance, Sierra Leonean military remnants assisted by the RUF were able to regroup to seize the rich Kono diamond fields late in 1998 and to attack Freetown in January 1999. With ECOMOG forces in disarray an incoming civilian president in Nigeria gave notice that his country's troops would be withdrawn from Sierra Leone. Lacking an army of its own, the Kabbah government was forced to sue for peace. The Lome agreement (July 1999) favoured the rebel RUF, which entered into an unstable power-sharing agreement. This collapsed in April-May 2000 when the RUF seized large numbers of UN peace keeping troops (UNAMSIL) sent to replace ECOMOG.

Charles Taylor, meanwhile, had over-extended himself, supporting rebel groups not only in Sierra Leone but also in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. Anti-Taylor militias (LURD, comprising mainly Mandingo, but assisted by volunteers from Guinea and Sierra Leone) struck at the Taylor regime from Lofa County, while MODEL (a successor to the Krahn faction in ULIMO) mobilised in Côte d'Ivoire and struck at Taylor from south-eastern Liberia. Meanwhile, Taylor's revenues (mainly from diamonds and timber) attracted international scrutiny. UN Security Council sanctions were imposed both on the Taylor regime and its international business partners. Interventions by the British and Guinean armies helped prop up the government in Sierra Leone while UNAMSIL was hastily reorganised and re-deployed. With Taylor no longer able to provide cross-border support, the RUF leadership agreed to disarm, a process complete by the end of

2001. Diehards crossed the border into Liberia, to assist Taylor, pursued by officers of the special court set up to try war crimes in Sierra Leone. Taylor himself faces indictment in this court. President Kabbah was able to declare Sierra Leone at peace in February 2002. LURD and MODEL were meanwhile banging on the gates of Monrovia. After an upsurge of street fighting in the capital in June-July 2003 Taylor agreed to step down. A peace agreement was signed on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2003, ushering in a power-sharing interim government. A UN peace keeping force (UNMIL) deployed during 2004 and began the process of demobilising an estimated 103,000 ex-combatants. Presidential elections are scheduled for later in 2005.

## **2.2 Causes of conflict in Liberia and Sierra Leone**

From a structural point of view both Sierra Leone and Liberia had, before the onset of the conflicts, a range of socioeconomic characteristics that are common to many countries that undergo civil conflict and that have been identified by cross-national econometric research as risk factors for civil war onset (see for example Fearon and Laitin 2003). Chief among these are chronic poverty, economic dependence on a small range of natural resource commodities, and a demography characterized by a “youth bulge.” Statistically the chances of conflict onset also vary with geography (with higher chances for countries that have neighbours at war) and with time (with especially high chances at the moment of the end of the Cold War, as superpower support is realigned, aid monies are diverted and fresh supplies of small arms enter markets).

While these factors are associated generally with conflict onset, they only partially account for the situations in Sierra Leone and Liberia—even after we account for all of these factors, the estimated likelihood of a civil war breaking out in any given year is low.<sup>iii</sup> Furthermore, although these correlations are indicative of risks, they do not, in themselves, provide mechanisms that account for onset in any given case.

There are multiple mechanisms that link the levels of poverty seen in Liberia and Sierra Leone to conflict onset. The two most prominent are that in poor economies states are weak and susceptible to takeover and that the lack of employment opportunities motivates frustrated youths to seek material advantages through violent means. These mechanisms are not mutually exclusive and there is evidence for both mechanisms working in both conflicts. A striking feature of the conflicts in the Mano River union is that the states were so weak that, unlike other conflicts in Africa, the states were not major parties to the conflicts. In Liberia, the most intense moments of the conflict involved conflicts between rival rebel groups; in Sierra Leone they were between the RUF rebel group and civil militias. In both conflicts, the state, if represented

militarily at all, was represented largely through multilateral forces or mercenary units. There is also evidence from interview and survey material that the fighters themselves originated from very impoverished backgrounds, with little or no access to education or health services or to formal sector employment (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004).

There are also multiple mechanisms linking natural resource dependence to conflict onset (Humphreys 2005). One of these focuses on the desires of fighters, with violence driven by the desire to control rich interior resources (notably timber and diamonds for the cases at hand). The wars themselves seemed to provide much evidence for this mechanism (diamonds fuelled fighting in Sierra Leone and the Taylor regime made upwards of \$50 million a year from timber deals). However, the rebel greed explanation focuses on the motivations of the rebel leadership and does not account for the motivations of rank and file fighters. Survey research from Sierra Leone indicates that rank and file fighters had little awareness of the natural resource economy and accorded it relatively low prominence in their thinking about the conflict (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004). Natural resource dependence can also account for conflict onset through providing a financing mechanism for conflict. There is indeed evidence that even if fighters were not motivated by a desire to control resources, their units were sustained in part by natural resource financing. Finally, natural resources can affect conflict risks through mechanisms quite independent of their impacts on the motivations and financing of fighters. One channel is through the erosion of state capacity that often accompanies a reliance on natural resources. When this erosion of capacity is accompanied, or spurred, by rampant corruption, it can provide not just an opportunity but also a motivation for violent action against the state: the discourse of state corruption of the natural resources sector figured very prominently, and seemingly to great effect, in the documents produced by the RUF leaderships (RUF/SL 1995).

Understanding the causes of the Mano River conflicts also requires an understanding of who the fighters were, and what motivated them as individuals. On this, opinions are divided. One view is that the fighters are mainly urban street youth with little if any ideological agenda, destructive of the (otherwise largely contented) peasant populations in the areas in which they deploy (Mkandawire 2002). Another view stresses unresolved *agrarian* tensions dating back to the late nineteenth century, when the imposition of colonial rule froze in place institutional controls that bear down heavily on the commoner classes, through controls on land, labour and property that limit the capacity of women and rural young people to alleviate their poverty through their own efforts.



In our investigations, we find little support for the urban bandits thesis—at least among the rank and file of the rebel organization. More than 80% of 1000 ex-combatants sampled in a study of demobilization in Sierra Leone had backgrounds in farming or rural schools, and the leadership of the RUF included an influential educated group with strong agrarian interests. Interviewed about causes of the war, fighters and civilians stressed the importance of grievances concerning land, labour and women's property. The spread of fighting to Côte d'Ivoire (since 2003) – where land and citizenship rights of immigrants are issues – suggests that more attention should be paid throughout the region to the agrarian causes of the instability.

In summary we do not point to a single explanation for the origins of the Mano River union conflicts. But a cluster of forcing factors find strong empirical support and should feature prominently in the design of post conflict development strategies. These include: the weakness of state capacity, the poor regulation of natural resource industries, ingrained corruption, alienation of populations from governmental processes, and rural disaffection, particularly among youths, arising from poor education and employment opportunities.

### **2.3 Impact of the two conflicts on development outcomes**

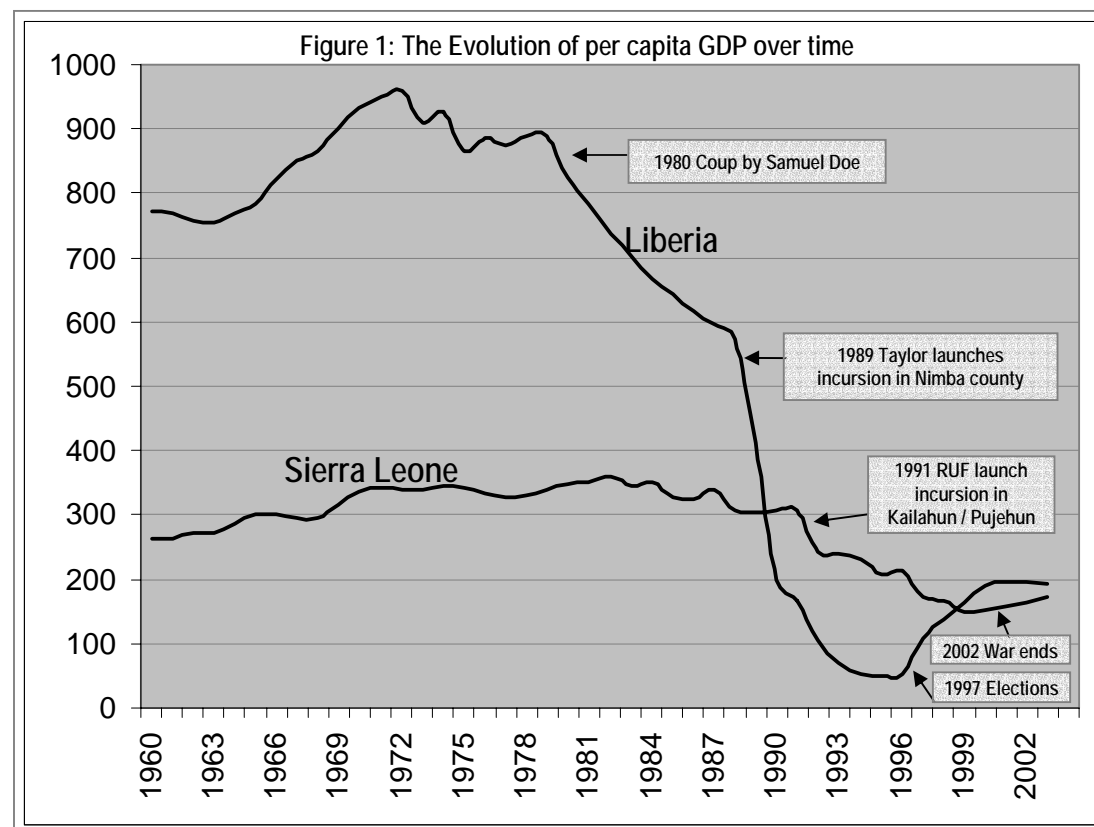
Even before the beginning of the conflicts, the levels of economic development in these two countries were low. The pre-war economies of Sierra Leone and Liberia were dominated by mineral enclaves. Alluvial diamond mining was the mainstay in Sierra Leone, but techniques were mainly pre-industrial and recovery rates low. Outside Freetown and the diamond centres the country remained impoverished, with particularly low levels of agricultural modernization, and some of the highest infant mortality rates in the world. From the 1970s the best diamond deposits began to approach exhaustion and the economy went into decline. In 1987 the APC government defaulted with the IMF and had to seek unfavourable commercial loans to sustain its basic activities. The rapid decline of rural primary education and health services were clear signs of financial crisis.

Backed by generous US aid the pre-war Liberian economy was somewhat more buoyant. The original constitution was designed for the needs of a Black settler society of planters and traders limited to the coastal fringe. Threatened by British and French incursions, the Monrovia government imposed rule over the interior from c. 1900. This involved often violent subjugation by the Liberian Frontier Force, and the scars have yet fully to heal. The Executive Mansion recognised individual land rights only of those up-country people deemed (by virtue of education and wealth) to be “civilized” (*keni*). The land and property rights of a great majority of Liberians

remained dependent upon membership in ethnically-based communities dominated by chiefs and custom.

In both countries, therefore, a small elite controlled vast wealth while a mass of ordinary people remained in extreme poverty. In Sierra Leone diamond wealth flows in private channels. In Liberia money from mineral and land concessions passes through the Executive Mansion.

Consistent with these economic structures, much of the fighting was centred on islands of mineral or plantation wealth. Nonetheless, in both countries the geographic spread of the conflicts were wide, with fighting resulting in the displacement of the majority of rural Liberians and Sierra Leoneans. At one stage in the late 1990s more than half a million refugees from both conflicts were living in neighbouring Guinea. An estimated 40% of Sierra Leone's population was displaced by the conflict. Gates established by factions at key points on the rudimentary road networks of both countries choked interior trade. Transportation became scarce due to unofficial taxes and the risk of ambush or robbery. Local markets collapsed. Clinics and schools were looted and destroyed, and teachers and health workers were either killed or abducted to provide services to rebel factions in the bush.

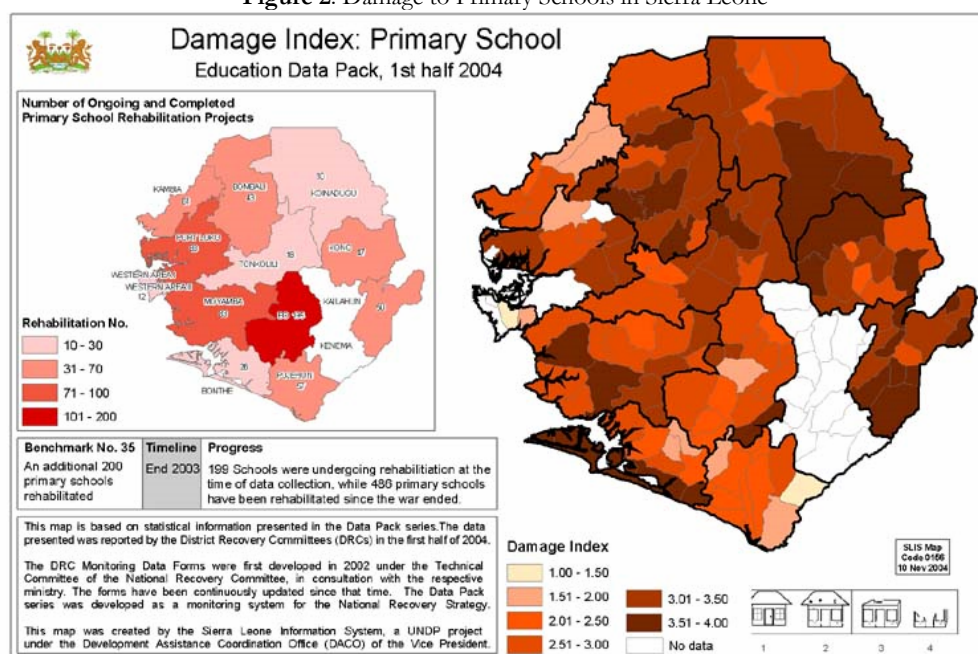


**Note:** GDP per capita data based on World Bank, WDI 2004 series, NY.GDP.MKTP.KD and SP.POP.TOTL; GDP is measured in constant 1995 \$US.

In both countries, the result of the conflicts was a massive decline in income. The years before the conflict never produced anything like the declines in welfare seen once the violence began. Income figures show an average annual growth rate of about -5% throughout the conflict years in Sierra Leone and a 50% decline in real *per capita* income over the course of the conflict; the declines in income were even more drastic in Liberia, with an average 7% per annum decline in income between 1980 and 1997 and a total 80% decline in per capita over that period. As illustrated in Figure 1, these declines in income correspond very directly to the timing of conflict.

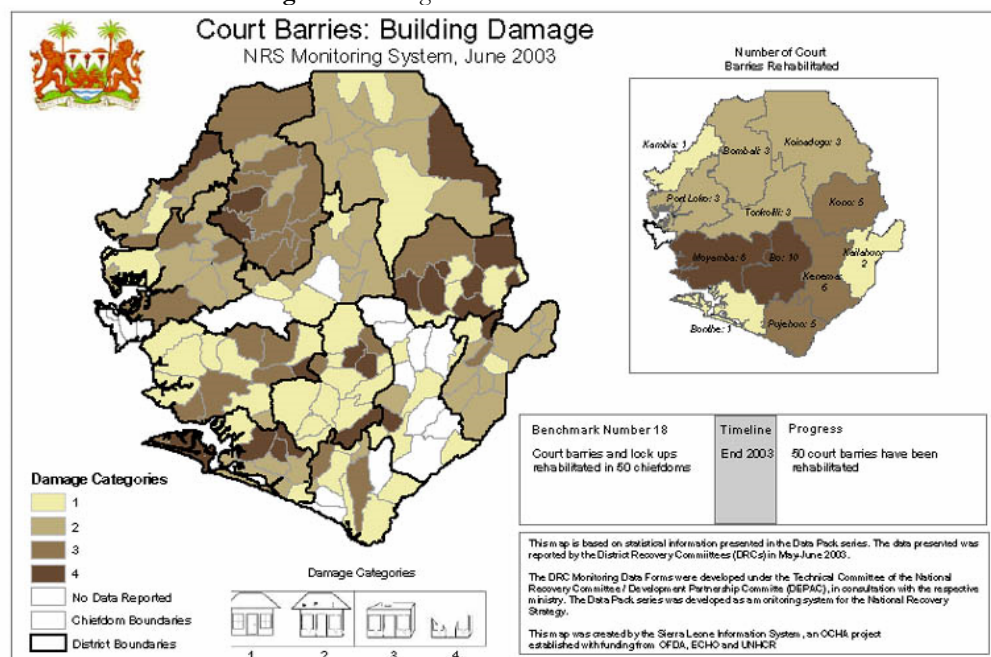
The decline in income is however only a poor indicator of the decline in *capital*—a feature of conflict that can adversely affect welfare far into the future. In fact the level of destruction and dislocation varied considerably from place to place and was closely related to different displacement patterns. In rural central Sierra Leone displacement dates from 1995, but many villagers returned home accompanied by civil defence forces within 18 to 24 months, often to find their villages desolated. In parts of the north, villagers lived under RUF “occupation” for up to four years. Isolated corners of Kailahun and Pujehun Districts were controlled by the RUF for a decade. In some of these cases physical destruction was low, but people suffered from high levels of forced labour, sexual violence, hunger, and the total lack of basic services. In other areas physical destruction was chronic, resulting in a razing of homes and infrastructure. Figures 2 and 3 below, produced by the Development Assistance Coordination Office, indicate the broad reach and the geographic variation in destruction levels.

Figure 2: Damage to Primary Schools in Sierra Leone



Source: [http://www.daco-sl.org/encyclopedia2004/2\\_data/2\\_3/2\\_3a/2\\_3a\\_5\\_e/code0156\\_A2.jpg](http://www.daco-sl.org/encyclopedia2004/2_data/2_3/2_3a/2_3a_5_e/code0156_A2.jpg) Data refer to 2004 and incorporate information on schools rehabilitated since the end of the war.

**Figure 3: Damage to Court Barriers in Sierra Leone**



Source: [http://www.daco-sl.org/encyclopedia2004/2\\_data/2\\_3/2\\_3a/2\\_3a\\_2\\_c/A3.jpg](http://www.daco-sl.org/encyclopedia2004/2_data/2_3/2_3a/2_3a_2_c/A3.jpg) Data refer to 2003 and incorporate information on Court Barriers that have been rehabilitated since the end of the war.

In Liberia, there were three separate periods of fighting (referred to by Liberians as “World Wars I, II and III”). Some villagers report being displaced six or seven times. A year after Taylor’s departure from the presidency, only a minority of the rural population in Lofa and Cape Mount Counties had ventured back home. Few of these returnees were yet confident or well enough equipped to invest in more than makeshift repairs. A typical pattern was for husbands to check on property and farms or plantations, leaving the rest of the family in IDP camps around Monrovia. The reasons are highly practical. Camps offer food and basic services (including education). After more than a decade of dislocation the displaced camp offered some children their first chance of schooling.

The capital loss in Sierra Leone and Liberia is not to be measured in the destruction of physical capital alone. War also resulted in a loss of skilled personnel from both business and government. Many highly-educated Liberians went to the United States. Many Sierra Leoneans fled to Guinea, and some later moved to other parts of Africa (where they now occupy teaching and other professional positions from The Gambia to Botswana). In times of conflict, the loss in human capital stock through normal processes (of ageing and obsolescence) and the flight of skilled personnel is compounded by losses due to targeting of educated elites. Additionally the normal restocking of human capital through education is, at least in part, suspended due to the closure and destruction of schools and health facilities (though this decline in investment in health and education is at least partly offset by services delivered in IDP and refugee camps).

However, although the loss in physical and human capital and development opportunities is clear, the impact of the war on 'social capital' is more ambiguous. While the wars destroyed some social structures, it also produced new possibilities for social organization. The wars brought to light a crisis of governance in the two countries and the result now is a heightened level of politicization among the populations of the countries. As many of those consulted during the course of our research argued, one result of the conflict, in part due to the great increase in migration and information sharing across communities, brought about by forced displacement, was that "our eyes have been opened." This has been evident both in regards to the centralized management of the countries' resources and to the management of local economies.

The management of national resources has received the most attention. In aiming to control the flow of wealth from diamonds and timber, both Taylor and the RUF claimed to be reformist in intent, but Taylor perpetuated the patrimonial system when he reached the Executive Mansion (Pajibo 1999). The broad concern over the management of these sectors is still very general in both countries. It is now also shared by the international community, which presses for greater accountability and transparency over resource exploitation. If procedures governing diamond and logging transactions were less murky there would be less incentive for warlords to fight to control these resources, it is reasoned. Monitoring of logging activity and the tracking of alluvial diamond movements are intended, therefore, to force governments and concessionaires towards greater openness, upon the basis of which democratic debate about national income and expenditure can begin. In Liberia, the role of County Superintendents (the chief agents of local administration) currently excites critical comment. In some quarters it is openly suggested that the peace process removed Taylor only to open up space for a succession of mini-Taylors at the County level. The situation in Sierra Leone's diamond industry is considerably healthier. According to one recent report, the levels of transparency and professionalism in the diamond industry exceeds that found in other sectors in the country (Partnership Africa Canada and Network Movement for Justice and Development 2005).

The management of local economies has also begun to undergo a transformation. At grass roots level, villagers in both countries draw attention to an agrarian crisis affecting land, labour and marriage. Whatever national ambitions Taylor and the RUF leadership cherished, both the NPFL and RUF recruited a majority of their fighters from rural communities, and much of the violence of the two wars is explicable in terms of the local agrarian tensions in which the fighters and their village victims were enmeshed. Young people complain that constraints on

access to land and the exploitation of their labour through the application of onerous marriage customs in local courts were conducive to vagrancy, and that rural vagrants were vulnerable to militia recruitment. Even chiefs and elders are at times frank in their assessment that this type of social exclusion was a factor feeding the violence. In many cases the worst violence and atrocity was the product of intra-village revenge. As one consultation put it “our village was 100 per cent destroyed in the war but 95% was the work of our own indigenous rebels not the RUF”. A consequence is that some local institutions of indirect rule are probably beyond repair. Local pressure for rural institutional reform is beginning to bear fruit. The Liberian Senate enacted a bill in November 2003 protecting the property of rural women in marriage and preventing some of the customary procedures through which young men are trapped in sexual liaisons to extract unpaid farm labour. Land tenure reform attracts vigorous debate. Local awareness of these issues is as high in rural Sierra Leone, but as yet government and donors are not fully seized of the need for agrarian reform.

## 2.4 Implications for the MDGs

There are two major implications of the destructive and transformative aspects of the conflict for the prospects these countries have to meet the MDGs. The first relates to the *rate of development* that is required to reach the goals in these countries; the second to *institutional and political constraints* in a post conflict environment.

Rate of development: a considerable challenge for Liberia and Sierra Leone—as for other post conflict countries—derives from the fact that the Millennium Development Goals targets were set in 2000 for a 2015 goal that is itself based on a 1990 benchmark. For most countries, the 1990 benchmark provides countries with a headstart of 10 years of growth for achieving the goals. In the cases of Sierra Leone and Liberia, however, the timing of war in both countries was such that the “gains” of 1990-2000 period were in fact losses due to conflict. All indicators are worse in 2000 than they were in 1990. This has doubly adverse implications: to reach the goals, Sierra Leone and Liberia have to make *larger* gains in a *shorter* period of time.

Figure 4, based on World Bank data, indicates three possible paths for the changes in one of the indicators for Sierra Leone: the share of population living below the minimum level of dietary energy consumption. One path indicates the path that would have been required for a smooth transition from 45% to the (still high) 23% that would have been needed to meet goal 1, according to this indicator. The second path shows the change in this indicator to date, plus projected change under the pessimistic scenario that the pattern from 1990 to the present will continue. The third path shows what is needed in terms of change in this indicator in order for

Sierra Leone to meet its goal given its history to date. The sharp differences between these paths reflect the stark differences between goals and reality thus far. Whereas a smooth path from 1990 would require cutting this indicator by less than one percentage point per year; achieving it given the real post-war base-line requires cutting it by more than two percentage points per year.

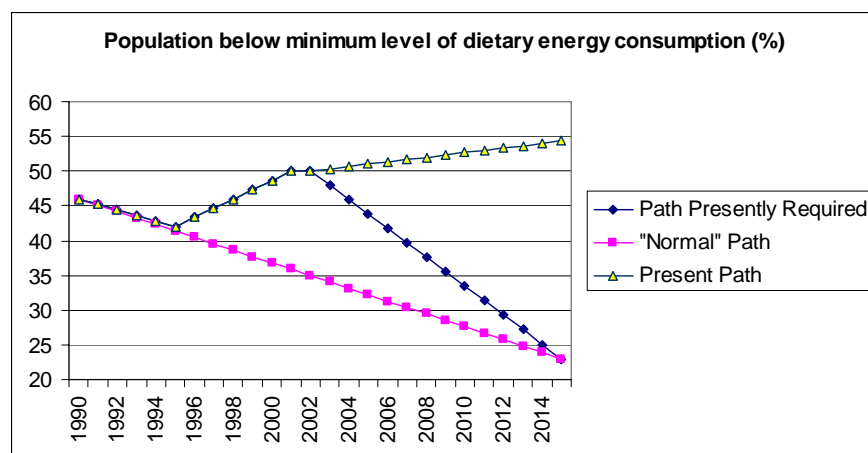


Figure 4: Actual and Required Paths in Sierra Leone

In Figure 5 we show the results of the same exercise for Liberia. The data suggest that the disparity between actual paths and required paths is here even more pronounced. Liberia started off in 1990 from a better position on this indicator than Sierra Leone; from 1990, an average annual reduction of two thirds of a point is what would have been required to meet the target on this indicator; now however, like Sierra Leone, a two point annual drop is needed. The data make it clear that in no way can achieving the MDGs in either be country be thought of as business as usual or as requiring no more than a return to pre-war levels of growth. *Reaching the MDGs in post African conflict countries likely requires more and more rapid progress over the next ten years than is required anywhere else in the world.*

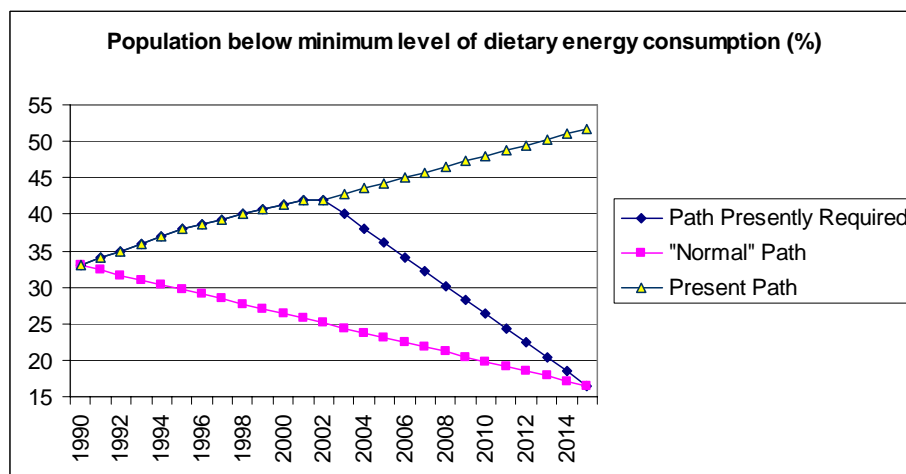


Figure 5: Actual and Required Paths in Liberia

Institutional and Political Constraints: the second challenge to post conflict countries is that just at the moment when the greatest efforts are needed in a wide range of sectors, the institutional capacity to effect these changes is at its weakest.

There is, first, a problem of government capacity. Government institutions, already weak, were especially badly hit by the loss in human capital that occurred during the conflict. This brain drain was perpetuated after the conflicts ended through the recruitment of skilled personnel from government positions into international and national non-governmental organizations. The problem is particularly acute in sectors in which government provided services successfully in the past—notably in education and health—but commensurably less so in sectors—such as agricultural extension—in which government behaviour was primarily informative, regulatory, or even predatory. These considerations lead us to emphasise a first simple conclusion: *skill shortages, especially in government, are likely severely to hamper the recovery process in both countries.*

There is also concern that, beyond questions of personnel, the basic institutions of governance – especially at the local level – have been undermined by war. Liberia and Sierra Leone retain, in modified form, a system of indirect rule introduced at the beginning of the 20th century. Both countries administer rural areas through a hierarchy of traditional chiefs. It seems that war has harmed the prestige of chiefs. Many government-recognised ruling families were founded during unstable conditions in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century through the exploits of war leaders. But as chieftaincy adapted to more peaceful conditions in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, warrior skills were lost. When war returned in the 1990s many chiefs were hunted by the insurgents, as representatives of a hated regime, and sought refuge in towns or overseas.

The incoming democratic government in Sierra Leone in 1996 prioritised the return of paramount chiefs. The British government accepted the argument that only if chiefs returned would people follow, and helped fund their return. In fact many villagers either never left or invested in their own security by paying for initiation in the civil defence movement. Many chiefs were late arrivals. But in a society temporarily chief-less, less deferential younger elements continued to ask why chiefs were needed. It was argued that in abandoning their communities, chiefs had forfeited the respect due to warrior-leaders.

In Liberia there is similar disarray at the local level. Each faction tries to control key positions in local government—County superintendent, mayor, and paramount chief—and at times two sets of officials (Monrovia appointees and faction incumbents) openly feud over who is in charge. Only at the lowest level—township chief—is there a degree of popular legitimacy



and accountability. Seemingly in recent years the custom of popularly electing town chiefs has grown up, though apparently without constitutional mandate. All other levels are, in theory, nominated by the Executive Mansion and approved by Senate. As in Sierra Leone, war in Liberia has made rural people question whether an intensely top-down system of indirect rule is incapable of reform. Some aspects of “custom” have already been overturned by the legislative process since the departure of Taylor. Senators representing women’s interests sponsored a bill (passed in November 2003) to improve rural women’s marriage and property rights, removing some of the customary props through which rural land-owning elites controlled married women’s resources but also exploited the labour of young men (expended in bride service).

Finally, there is a slowness of adaptation of governments to a new political culture. Meeting the MDGs implies better delivery of basic services to the poor. The political cultures of both Sierra Leone and Liberia are strongly patrimonial. In Sierra Leone, presidents have in the past preferred to claim that basic services—such as education—were privileges, not rights, and best supplied by talking directly to the main benefactor (State House). The Executive Mansion, from the days of President Tubman, was equally powerful as a provider of social benefits through patronage in Liberia. Charles Taylor openly reverted to the Tubman model during his period in office (Pajibo 1999). The rights-oriented framework implicit in the Millennium Development Goals however implies relations between the government and the poor that is incompatible with this long-established patrimonial form of politics.

But both the conflict and the humanitarian interventions have given villagers a first taste of grass-roots democratic accountability – for example in the form of elected committees to supervise distribution of resources and manage community-driven rehabilitation (Archibald & Richards 2002a). And there is evidence that war has shifted local perception a few points in the direction of rights-oriented thinking, and away from earlier patrimonial notions (that food security and basic education for example are gifts provided by generous patrimonial leaders, cf. Archibald & Richards 2002b). That this change in perception is permanent is often voiced by villagers recounting their reaction to the dislocating experiences they have undergone. Nor are all chiefs opposed to calls for a rights-oriented approach to service provision at the local level. Some chiefs recognise customary prestige is no longer enough to guarantee respect, and appear interested in new roles approximating those of an elected mayor.

We conclude that political constraints to achieving the MDGs remain especially important in both countries, and are as problematic at decentralised levels of governance as at the apex. In African post conflict recovery countries donor emphasis on propping up uncertain peace

processes by rebuilding state institutions risks having the perverse effect of boosting patrimonial ways of thinking which war itself has thrown into doubt. Decentralization represents an opportunity for new forms of accountable, efficient local government and service provision, but due to the long-term derelict nature of local government in Liberia and Sierra Leone (especially the latter, where district councils have not functioned for over 30 years) there is lack of awareness among the public of what to expect and demand. This means that development planning is at risk of capture by ethnicised patrimonialism, the game most local politicians and constituents know. Specific thought needs to be given to the issue of how to inculcate and support the emergence of a culture of rights among both citizens and officials as a necessary frame for MDG initiatives.

### **3 The Transition to Peace**

#### **3.1 From humanitarian relief to development in Liberia and Sierra Leone**

Typically, post-conflict countries experience a humanitarian interregnum, in which international agencies provide not only emergency feeding and shelter but many basic social services (such as health and education). Sierra Leone passed through this phase from 2000 to 2002, and it is current in Liberia.

An important aspect of the process in Sierra Leone has been the successful demobilization of large numbers of fighters. The demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) process, while suffering from flaws, was successful in getting guns out of communities and in doing so in a manner that did not appear inequitable vis-à-vis the rival political groupings in the country. These are preconditions for success that should be emulated elsewhere. Many other lessons learned from this transitional period have been documented by the United Nations Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit and elsewhere.

The problems of DDR in Liberia are many. It is hard to tell what progress has been made due to confusion over numbers. There is a strong suspicion that some fighters have registered more than once, whereas others have been deprived of their weapons by commanders who allegedly redistribute guns to civilian youths, so that these youths can claim a disarmament package. Recovery of weapons is far from complete, and disgruntled fighters mutter about reverting to war. A factor is their idleness. This reflects a chronic undersupply of promised skill-training packages. Ex-combatants besiege potential training sites, to await non-existing courses, and for now, few are tempted by road rehabilitation work at \$2/day. Private sector employment

has been slow to materialise. The large timber sector remains under Security Council sanctions, and plantation owners are cautious to invest in rehabilitation, perhaps especially given the rebellious mood among some of their labour force. Without a solution to bottlenecks in the DDR process, IDPs and refugees remain reluctant to begin the laborious process of rebuilding their villages, sensing war might return at any time.

From both the Sierra Leone and the Liberia DDR process, two central lessons stand out. First there is a *need for a more robust complaints mechanism*. Research indicates that demobilization programs are subject to manipulation by individual ex-combatants, often to the exclusion of other ex-combatants. A failure to put in place a mechanism to address grievances emanating from the process can result in new frustrations as well as clusters of fighters that remain excluded outright and that continue to engage in conflicts elsewhere in the region (Richards et al 2004; Human Rights Watch 2005). Second, the failure of the training from demobilization processes to lead to job opportunities was a primary source of frustration among ex-combatants (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004). More broadly, to date *there has been a failure in both countries to link demobilization processes with development planning*.

A second area of import is the impact that humanitarian agencies have on local economies. A positive aspect of the transitional period has been that the humanitarian agencies provide services to higher standards than some poor people have historically experienced. Many IDPs in camps in Monrovia say that they have appreciated for the first time the full value of education, including education for girls, and that they will not agree to re-settle in remote areas of Lofa County without schools and teachers. Post-conflict governments will as a result be driven to meet their MDG commitments by much more clearly articulated demand from the poor. A negative aspect, noted above, is that NGOs drain away skilled staff from government services, which end up demoralised, with a much reduced capacity to plan and execute longer-term recovery initiatives. Also some NGOs act as a law unto themselves. Different standards of benefit provision may prevail among agencies working in communities previously administered to a single national standard. Some IDPs in Sierra Leone were given packages including cement and roofing materials and so rebuilt their villages to a much higher standard than before the war. Others were given only basic tools, seeds and tarpaulins. More isolated communities were left to fend for themselves, too far off road for agency staff to venture. A complex web of local tensions eventuates from the evident inequalities in restorative action in the humanitarian interregnum, and nobody knows quite to whom they can complain.

In both Sierra Leone and Liberia these problems have been tackled in part through inter-agency coordination under government auspices. Some agencies have pushed further by implementing international standards, such as the Sphere humanitarian protocol, or through seeking to make activity “rights compliant”. Such approaches can usefully draw upon or link with national level rights-oriented initiatives. For example both countries have invested in truth and reconciliation processes, which encourage citizens to reflect upon the role played by social injustices, including injustices in delivery of development and humanitarian benefits, in provoking or sustaining conflict. The humanitarian interregnum risks creating dependency, or unrealistic expectations about service delivery. But where it is linked to attempts to stimulate a culture of rights it can lay an important foundation for citizen involvement in the pursuit of MDG.

### **3.2 Development planning now in Sierra Leone**

Sierra Leone has produced development strategies at three levels. In the short term, and in principle completed, is Sierra Leone’s *National Recovery Strategy*. Strategies in the short to medium term are the national PRSP, the *Public Investment Programmes* (PIPs) and *Sierra Leone’s Medium-Term Expenditure Framework*. Strategies for the long term are developed especially in Sierra Leone’s *Vision 2025* document.

The National Recovery Strategy document makes no mention of the Millennium Development Goals, except to emphasize that the goals need to be addressed in the PRSP. The Vision 2025 document, offers to set “the long-term direction for Sierra Leone and [aims] to provide a sense of purpose and directions for the development management process in Sierra Leone.” But again it makes no explicit mention of the MDGs. The *Vision 2025* document is itself in a sense a bigger project than the Millennium Development Goals. Whereas the MDGs focus especially on basic human needs such as health and education and freedom from hunger and poverty, the Vision 2025 focuses on the overall state of the country, as captured by the more general goal of a “Sweet-Salone” – a “United People, Progressive Nation, Attractive Country.” The Interim PRSP report makes no mention of the goals, nor does the status report on the preparatory activities for the full Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper of September 2003. The December 2004 (“final”) draft, of the PRSP does however make explicit mention of the role of the MDGs in Sierra Leone’s development strategy.

A number of features stand out from our enquiries:

- Although sensitization initiatives have been launched, there is little knowledge about the MDGs in Sierra Leone and little recognition of their strategic importance for the country. This is in part due to the fact that the goals have not been presented as a declaration of rights for individual Sierra Leoneans – for example as a statement of the commitment to children that they can complete primary education – but instead are presented as just one more in a series of international expressions of goodwill. The failure to communicate the rights aspect of the Millennium Goals can be attributed at least in part to the documentation supplied by the UNDP head office in New York to facilitate sensitization campaigns.
- The MDGs are conceived as external to Sierra Leone: rather than being seen as part of an agreement into which Sierra Leone entered as a sovereign nation, the MDGs are conceived of as being designed and pushed from the outside. In fact, that the MDGs are international goals (agreed to by Sierra Leone) is what makes them a powerful lobbying tool for the country. Furthermore, although the goals themselves are part of an international process, the identification of optimal strategies for meeting the goals will have to be developed largely through consultative processes in-country.
- Although there is a description in the PRSP of how the PRSP relates to the MDGs, the linkages between these as are presently largely formal. The PRSP describes itself as “the first big, conscious step” towards meeting the goals. But the most common view expressed by government officials in Sierra Leone was that the PRSP process pushed the MDGs off the agenda. In fact the PRSP should be seen as a strategy designed explicitly to meet the goals. While an analysis of the PRSP does admit a very strong consistency between the PRSP and the MDGs, the PRSP does not describe whether the targets set in the PRSP for 2005-2007 are sufficiently ambitious to place the country on track to meet the MDGs; in other words, these short term targets appear not to have been *calibrated* in order to meet the MDGs.
- The PRSP provides benchmarks for 2005, 2006 and 2007; it provides a costing of strategies and it estimates the financing gap that exists for meeting these strategies. This helps to turn the PRSP into a useful basis for negotiating with the donor community with respect to aid and debt. Furthermore, the task of aligning the PRSP with the MDGs will not be as difficult as elsewhere and the preparatory work for the PRSP will continue to be useful in helping align the PRSP with the MDGs. In linking the present benchmarks to an MDG strategy the tools that have been developed by the Millennium Project will be

useful but at present these appear not to be known in Sierra Leone and were not employed to produce the present costings.

### **3.3 Planning for the MDGs in the recovery process in Liberia**

A baseline for Liberia's MDG strategy was produced under the Taylor government, and published in September 2003, a month after Charles Taylor stepped down in favour of the National Transitional Government (NTGL). The basis for national recovery then changed. UNDP and World Bank carried out a comprehensive needs assessment, resulting in the adoption by the NTGL of a Results-Focused Transition Framework (RFTF) in January 2004 as the basis for the national recovery and development strategy until elections scheduled for October 2005. There is no specific mention of the MDGs in the Joint Needs Assessment document (NTGL/UN/WB 2004) which is the core of the RFTF.

The basic focus of the needs assessment document is demobilization of combatants, resettlement of refugees and repair and rehabilitation of infrastructure. The financial requirements are \$487 million, of which demobilization and resettlement accounts for 32% and infrastructure repair 27%. Restoration of services and economic recovery are lesser priorities. Health and education are budgeted at 12%, and revitalization of agriculture and livelihoods accounts for 10%. Only a few targets are specified in quantitative form (such as the demobilization of 38,000-53,000 male and female ex-combatants by December 2004, essential restorative support for 350,000 refugees and 490,000 internally displaced persons, and rehabilitation, re-supply and revitalization of at least 25% of primary and secondary schools by December 2005). Others are phrased as generalised aspirations, for example that availability and access to food will be improved, and that there will be "nationwide action to improve the Liberian people's access to effective primary health care".

Implementation of the RFTF has been hampered by two major considerations – difficulties with DDR, as described above, and lack of political will in the factionalised interim regime.

The lack of political will derives from the short term perspective of interim regimes. All eyes are on the election, as faction leaders jockey for influence and advantage. Serious work within government on an MDG strategy is impeded by two further problems:

- Difficulties over deployment of agents of local government in the provinces. In July 2004 more than half the fifteen Counties still lacked Superintendents – apex figures in local government. Monrovia appointees struggle to displace the local faction-endorsed power-brokers, and when established are often soon undermined by accusations of partisan redistribution of inputs for rehabilitation and reconstruction.

- Lack of basic equipment and facilities, restricting even the most routine operations of government. This includes HQ facilities, which often suffered extensive damage and looting in Monrovia street fighting in 2003 (a visit to the Minister of Education in 2004 required a torch-lit trip up the unlit main staircase of the ruined building still part occupied by IDPs)

Whether the NTGL will be able to meet its RFTF targets by December 2005 currently seems in doubt. Judging by planned expenditure in the needs assessment document Sector 4 (“governance, democracy and the development of the rule of law”) is considered more important than Sector 9 (“economic policy and development strategy”). Concern under the latter is largely with management issues. This suggests that other pressing concerns have overtaken the need for Liberia to address its strategy for meeting the MDGs and that, as elsewhere, security and development priorities are not well integrated with each other.

There are nonetheless important debates taking place within wider Liberian society, including grass-roots debates among villagers, refugees and ex-combatants. These debates are fundamentally about poverty, and how poverty conditioned the path towards violence. They are often surprisingly rich, both in fundamental insight into the causes of the conflict and in ideas about how Liberia needs to address its basic malaise (Atkinson & Mulbah 1998, Richards et al. 2005).

Our suggestion, therefore, is that pending elections, the development of an MDG strategy should focus largely on Liberian groups campaigning for justice and political reform, especially where these groups demonstrate good connections with both grass roots rural society and the organised lobby groups and caucuses in the Liberian Senate. Empowering Liberian civil society groups to launch the MDG debate among their constituents (including IDPs preparing for resettlement) would prepare the ground for a more accountable, socially-responsible and responsive style of government beyond October 2005. Some consultation strategies are discussed below. We also suggest inclusion of the MDG debate in the comprehensive national debate on an agenda for reform which leading Liberian civil rights activists propose should take place before elections at the end of 2005 (Byron Tarr, pers. comm.).

## 4 Recommendations

Consideration of the relationship between the Millennium Development Goals and the history of violent conflict in Sierra Leone and Liberia brings us to two general conclusions:

1. *The existence of extreme conflict risks is not a reason to abandon development initiatives or to aim lower.*

In these countries there is an especially strong case to be made for concerted and sustained investments in development in order to move out of a conflict-poverty trap. Conflict is (at least indirectly) a consequence of the failure of development. Conflict prevention requires development efforts to be re-doubled.

2. For the MDGs to be reached, *responses to conflict risks must be mainstreamed in development strategies*, whether or not countries are already experiencing violent conflicts. In post conflict countries, this means that *development strategies need to be particularly sensitive to features that gave rise to the conflict in the first place*. This will likely include the need for rapid and deep improvements in systems of governance and administration of justice, not least at the local level.

In the light of these conclusions we make ten more concrete proposals for post conflict countries to ensure that the MDGs are met in a manner that does not exacerbate conflict risks. The first four of these proposals emphasize an approach to planning that can be applied broadly in post-conflict countries, the remaining six emphasize particular areas of focus rendered germane by the history of conflict in the two cases we have examine.

#### **4.1 Use the MDGs as a source of leverage with development partners**

The Millennium Development Goals differ from other development initiatives insofar as they do not simply represent the ambitions of one development agency, one donor country, or one developing country. Rather, they are the result of an agreement—the Millennium Declaration—signed by heads of states at the largest and most inclusive gathering of such figures ever. The Millennium Declaration (for the full text, see <http://www.un.org/millennium/declaration/ares552e.htm>) can be considered to be an agreement between wealthy states and developing states to work together to reach the development goals. The underlying logic of the agreement is that there are certain basic livelihoods and welfare standards integral to the notion of common humanity – to attain these standards is a human right, states are the prime duty holders, and the international community stands ready to assist. This rights-based approach is emphasized repeatedly in the declaration, e.g. through the statement of a commitment “to making the right to development a reality for everyone.” The United Nations Millennium Project report (2005) proposes a more concrete



assignment of responsibilities, correlative to these rights, emanating from the agreement. Developing countries should “adopt development strategies bold enough to meet the Millennium Development Goals”, and wealthy countries should increase assistance to a level “based on actual needs to meet the Millennium Development Goals.”

This new way of thinking about how donor assistance should be set is also articulated in the report of the United Nations’ Secretary-General’s High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. Specifically, the panel notes that “debt sustainability [...] should be redefined as the level of debt consistent with achieving the Millennium Development Goals.”

Although preventing civil wars and supporting political stability are not among the Millennium Development Goals as such, these ambitions figure prominently in the Millennium Declaration and serve to highlight the salience of concerted action in post-conflict countries. In particular, the Millennium Declaration emphasizes that “we will spare no effort to free our peoples from the scourge of war,” and pledges “to give full support to the political and institutional structures of emerging democracies in Africa [and to] encourage and sustain regional and sub-regional mechanisms for preventing conflict and promoting political stability.”

The logic implies a different set of relations between developing country planning and international support than that those that have guided development policy in the past. To function as duty holders – i.e. to realize the right to development for their people - African states must ensure that they fulfil their part of the bargain. The first step in this is to develop a strategy that identifies what is needed. Governments can no longer claim that they are doing their best to improve the situation, but are committed to reach specified goals by 2015.<sup>iv</sup> In the Liberian draft MDG report, of 11 targets, 5 are rated as unlikely to be reached, for another two there are no data, for only four is reaching the goals considered probable.<sup>v</sup> These might be accurate predictions under an assumption of “business as usual”, but the point of an MDG strategy is not to *predict* whether a goal will be reached but to identify the conditions that need to be put in place so as to ensure that the goals *will* be reached.

Once a coherent strategy is developed, the strategy can act as a powerful tool to ensure that development partners fulfil their side of the bargain by altering their policies, changing their behaviour, or providing the financing needed to implement the strategy. Realising rights to development, however, will not come without a struggle.

The top three arguments that can be used by partners in development in order *not* to support an MDG strategy are: (1) that the targets themselves are not sufficiently precise (2) that the plans to

reach the goals are not sufficiently rigorous and (3) that the government has neither the capacity nor the will to implement these plans. Our next three recommendations identify ways that African countries should respond powerfully to these three concerns.

## **4.2 Define national targets for ambiguous goals**

Many of the MDGs are very precisely stated and, in principle at least, admit of easy quantification and monitoring. In these cases, African countries can structure MDG strategies around these precisely stated targets. But there are three respects in which some of the goals are not precisely stated. For each of these, countries can take the initiative of *actively defining the goals* at a national level, and then acting upon the goals as defined nationally.

First, as noted above, the MDGs are typically set with respect to a 1990 baseline. The actual targets then depend on information about the status of different development indicators in 1990. However in many post-conflict countries, these data do not exist, either because they were never collected (because of weak state capacity or ongoing conflicts) or they were destroyed or lost. In such cases—where benchmark data do not exist—countries should not give up on defining goals at the national level, but instead use estimates to set goals, even as they work to develop or recover their data series.

Second, some national targets may be imprecise because some of the goals are imprecise. One example is Target 16 under Goal 8 regarding youth employment: “In cooperation with the developing countries, develop decent and productive work for youth.” Countries can make this goal more concrete by, for example, setting a target of reducing youth unemployment by 50% by 2015 and by developing standards for what (nationally) might be deemed “decent and productive work” (for example, in terms of a national minimum wage for people under 25). The goals for HIV/AIDS and malaria are simply to “Halt and begin to reverse the spread” of these diseases. In this case, countries have an opportunity to operationalise concretely what is meant by a significant reversal of these diseases (such as a reduction of malaria related deaths among under 5s by half). Without such operationalisations, these goals, which are tremendously important for post conflict countries, risk being marginalized in the planning and costing processes.

Finally, some targets are only described at the international level. Most prominently Target 11 under goal 7 is to “achieve significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020.” For such targets, there is scope for countries to “adopt” a share of the international target as part of a national strategy. Sierra Leone or Liberia could contribute to the achievement of this goal by, for example, identifying 500,000 slum dwellers and operational sing

the notion of a “significant improvement” in their lives and incorporating the specified and operationalised goal within the national MDG strategy.

#### **4.3 Produce a *Costed* MDG plan**

A convincing strategy to meet the Millennium Development Goals will require an approach to development planning that identifies all the inputs that are needed to reach each of the goals, taking account of synergies that can exist between goals, and that estimates costs associated with these inputs. Rather than producing a development “wish list,” MDG strategies need to identify how different interventions will contribute towards the achievement of a specific outcome; they will also have to be able to withstand tough peer and donor scrutiny by demonstrating that the strategies selected are least cost strategies for achieving the required outcomes. Such multi-sectoral planning and costing is especially challenging for countries whose capacities have been weakened by conflicts. There are, however, resources that exist or that can be established to facilitate the task. First, the Millennium Project has produced tools for undertaking costing exercises. These tools are presently available at:

<http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/policy/needs03.htm>. Second, regional groupings, such as NEPAD, should be encouraged to establish planning “clinics”—a pool of experts capable of advising on development planning to be put at the disposal of countries with the greatest planning needs, and in particular post-conflict countries. Finally, countries should engage the services of internationally reputable accountancy firms who can play a supportive role either in costing or in auditing Millennium Development plans. Preliminary discussions with partners in such firms indicate that in the case of the Millennium Development Goals, this is a service that they would likely be willing to provide on a *pro bono* basis to African governments.

#### **4.4 Make Institutional Capacity and Good Governance Part of the Solution**

One of the greatest constraints facing post-conflict countries aiming to embark on an ambitious scaling up of development activities is the weakness of institutional capacity. Another is the domestic and international concerns about the integrity of government institutions. In order to reach the MDGs however, the sustainable development of institutional capacity should be seen as a part of national strategy, rather than as a constraint on national capacity. The implication is that an estimate of the human resources and training needs and a response to governance concerns *should be included and costed as a part of the national development strategy*. Measures to verify reductions in corruption, cronyism and ethnic favouritism need to be integral to planning.

Beyond these somewhat general principles, our investigations in Sierra Leone and Liberia suggest a number of more specific proposals for reform of public sector remuneration that should be included in national strategies in post conflict countries. Here it is appropriate to mention three:

- *Competitive Public Sector Wages.* Government ministries should be rendered more competitive in the hiring and retention of high quality experts. We have noted that in post-conflict countries, governments face competition from international and NGO sectors for their most skilled employees and suffer losses to international emigration. Responding to this competition has however been difficult because of caps on government salaries as a result of domestic concerns over salary inequities within bureaucracies and of budget constraints. There is a related problem resulting from the inadequate incentives for professionals to work in remote areas and the recognized need for better governmental staffing in these areas. At present, pay structures often impose effective *penalties* on civil servants working in remote regions. What is needed in such cases is the creation of a facility for competitive *performance-based* pay scales for a cadre of highly skilled professionals. The determination of wages needs to be better aligned with the incentives of experts to work in rural areas through the introduction of remote area allowances for civil servants. In all cases, increasing the ties between performance and salaries—for example by linking salaries or bonuses to individual targets or to aggregate performance<sup>vi</sup>—is especially important in post conflict countries where the awarding of higher salaries to administration elites may easily open new avenues for concerns over inequity, corruption and cronyism.

- *Solving the Hold-up Problem in Salary Delivery.* One bottleneck for the retention of remotely posted civil servants, including teachers, is the late or incomplete delivery of salaries and benefits. This sometimes results from bureaucratic corruption, as individuals at key points in the system create “hold up” problems (i.e. use their control over the delivery of benefits as a source of political power or to extract financial gains). We suggest there is a relatively easy-to-implement antidote to this kind of corruption: establish bank accounts for all government employees with an internationally reputable commercial bank willing to provide a public posting of salary payments into its accounts and to offer mobile banking services in remote areas. Banks ought to be interested to compete for such contracts.

- *Mainstream transparency.* The public posting of public sector wage payments is only one of many ways in which governments can mainstream transparency, providing citizens with richer information about governmental processes and reducing the opportunities for corrupt practices at different levels of government. A second prominent area in which transparency mainstreaming

is possible is through the public posting of detailed government budgets. Such postings have already been undertaken at the district level—literally on community noticeboards—in Sierra Leone and allow the possibility for concerned citizens to “follow the money” in cases where there is suspected misuse of public funds. In both the countries we have looked at, transparency in the natural resources sector is especially important, this will also be the case in other post-conflict countries in Africa. Through its moves to participate in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI, <http://www.eitransparency.org/>) Sierra Leone has already started taking strong steps in this direction. But it is not obvious that other countries plan on doing likewise.<sup>vii</sup>

#### **4.5 Employ a Radically Democratic Consultation Strategy**

We have highlighted the fact that there is now a strong desire in the populations of Sierra Leone and Liberia to play an active role in political decision-making. We have also noted that weak linkages between populations and elites were likely contributing factors to the conflicts in the region. Our research suggests that there is still a relatively poor degree of vertical political (elite-popular) communication. Repeatedly we found that consultation was interpreted not as dialogue but as “sensitization”—that is, as a one-way information flow from the top down. In cases where a richer notion of consultation was used—as undoubtedly was the case for example with the PRSP process in Sierra Leone—much of the consultations still focused on elites of different types—notably “cabinet ministers, parliamentarians, NGOs, members of civil society, the private sector, cooperative associations, local authorities, religious leaders, development partners” as well as the more diffusely defined “beneficiary groups.” Most difficult to reach are those populations in non-leadership positions and in remote areas who were often either the most active in the conflicts, or who suffered the greatest hardships. There are logistical reasons why it is especially hard to reach such groups. There are also less good reasons voiced for why these groups should not be consulted: that because they are poor and illiterate they do not know what is good for them.<sup>viii</sup>

Sierra Leone has recently made considerable progress in this direction, notably through the use of “participatory poverty assessments”. We suggest that these approaches should be encouraged and extended. Below we highlight ways in which such consultations can reach more deeply in the country and incorporate elements of *deliberative democratic consultations*. We propose that post conflict countries, should initiate such exercises in deliberative democratic consultation as a regular part of their policy development processes in order to reach the more frustrated populations least integrate into traditional political processes.

Drawing on experience of consultations in Sierra Leone and in Sao Tome and Principe, as well as the innovations developed as part of Sierra Leone's "focus group discussions" process (in, for example, the chieftdom consultations of the Governance Reform Secretariat), we suggest some additions to existing participative processes as employed in Sierra Leone. These additions are intended to ensure consultations will have the following desirable features: viz. they should be **regular, randomized, deliberative, non-manipulable, and verifiable**.

Let us describe each of these five features in turn.

To have a significant impact on national politics, deliberative processes of this form should be **regular**, taking place predictably on an annual or biennial basis. Deliberation processes should not usurp the decision making authority of formal institutions of government; but to be more than a public relations exercise they need to be integrated into regular decision making processes. Irregular consultative processes, such as those surrounding PRSP processes in many countries, suffer from not being integrated with normal politics. While they provide a space for citizens to voice their concerns they do not contribute to the strengthening of structures of accountability. Instead regular consultative processes will benefit from the fact that they can be viewed as a part of normal politics, that they can attain a higher degree of public recognition, that they can be used to hold politicians accountable and that they can be sensitive to change in citizen concerns and priorities over time.

The basic principle of a **randomized** consultation is that every single youth or adult in the country should have, *ex ante*, an equal chance of participating in the deliberation. One method is to use census data to randomly select 200 households from anywhere in the country and to organize public deliberation meetings in the village or neighbourhood of the selected households (with, perhaps, stratification by district). A second, more transparent procedure might be to hold a public event, aired on radio, in which the name of every village or neighbourhood, is entered into a "hat", with weights (frequencies) approximately proportional to the population size of the villages, and then to have, much as in a lottery, a child, or some other disinterested person draw 200 sites from the hat. This has the advantage that the selection process is more transparent, although *ex ante* equity is somewhat more difficult to achieve in this case. The advantage of such procedures is that they are *ex ante* equitable and that they provide for the likelihood that the most remote communities in the countries, those not accessible by road, will be represented. This

process results in a much deeper level of consultation than can be achieved by a strategy that attempts to hold meetings in all local centres—for example in every chiefdom—but that as a result systematically includes all members of the local branch of the “great and the good” and excludes all the smaller settlement units (historically often the camps of the farm slaves).

A third principle is that the consultation should be **deliberative**. The consultations should not be cantered around “sensitization” (i.e. conveying information from above), nor should they take the form of a survey; rather they should engage populations to reflect on different arguments in favour or against different strategies and to reach, insofar as possible an agreement on what approaches or solutions are needed to address problems of concern. In order to ensure that the outcomes of such deliberations can be integrated into policy design, the deliberations should, insofar as possible, be *structured* so that the outcomes of the deliberations can be easily aggregated. Such structure can be produced by providing communities with a precise set of questions and a set of rival arguments<sup>ix</sup>, inviting discussion and then ensuring that agreements reached are recorded. Since deliberation may not, in practice, produce consensus on all themes, at the community level, the degree of agreement or disagreement should itself be recorded. There should also be an attempt to monitor back-stage negotiations and side agreements (processes familiar from the sociology of Erwin Goffman, but known in Mende and other local languages as “hanging heads”). We recommend that to ensure that deliberation takes place not simply within decentralized communities but also between populations and elites, that political and social elites play a role in the deliberations, either as discussion participants or as discussion leaders.

Consultative processes are prone to various types of manipulation, whereby local or national political actors can attempt to use them for political gains. Good consultative designs should ensure **non-manipulability**. The first concern is that local deliberations are disproportionately affected by national elites who are engaged in the deliberations, either as discussion leaders or as participants. A simple structure can be used to reduce the chances that this occurs, and to make it transparent when it does occur: a small cadre of elite discussion leaders should be drawn from multiple sectors of society, from different political parties and from multiple organizations. These leaders should then be *randomly assigned* to lead discussions in different communities. If this is done, then it is a simple matter, to measure *ex post*, the extent to which leaders influence the outcome of decisions (in particular, the random assignment of leaders to discussion groups removes the confounding effects that can arise with other processes of assigning leaders to groups). This approach was employed recently for example in the design of Sao Tome and

Principe's national forum. The second concern is that local discussions are controlled too much by local leaders. To reduce the chances of this happening, parts of deliberations can be conducted using structured break-out groups—with, for example, some decisions being made within women-only groups, some within youth-only groups and so on.

The final way to ensure a high level of trust in the outcome of such deliberations is to ensure that the outcomes are **verifiable**. This can be done through simple procedures such as marking the outcomes of deliberations in real time during the meetings, leaving one copy of the outcomes of the deliberations with the villages/neighbourhoods, for public posting, and subsequently publicizing the result of every consultation in each region so that participants can later be guaranteed that their input has in fact been recorded in official data.

#### **4.6 Develop More Effective Communication Strategies**

In signing up to the MDGs, African countries have (in effect) agreed to implement a right's based approach to development (Klein Goldewijk & de Gaay Fortman 1999). African governments no longer do what is possible with limited resources but have undertaken to devise plans and strategies capable of attaining agreed international standards, and to be held accountable for attaining these targets by a certain date. The right to development is held by citizens. Any government treating its obligations lightly threatens its legitimacy. Potentially, it can be judged by the agreed international standard. To fail to meet the minimum standard without good reason is potentially a rights abuse.

However, the approach only makes sense if all parties know their rights and duties, and are in a position to press their case. In this, two types of communication strategies are key, first, communication strategies are needed to raise awareness of rights, second, strategies are needed to give access to the information that is necessary to render leaders accountable to citizens.

The first type of communication strategy focuses on the need of citizens to appreciate and practise their own rights and roles. We have noted strong tendencies of movements in this direction within populations in Sierra Leone and Liberia, the shift to a rights-based frame for thinking about development issues from the more familiar patrimonial notions prevailing in much of Africa over the past half century – that delivering development is a duty not a gift – is a very far reaching change. Citizens – but especially the poor– need scope to develop their capacities to play the MDG game through experience of rights-based development.



Increasingly, humanitarian agencies claim to offer post-war reconstruction within a rights-based framework (such as through application of the Sphere protocols, Sphere Project 2000). What is as important as the rhetoric, however, is to devise practises through which participants (beneficiaries, field staff, partner local NGOs and CBOs) elaborate the practical implications of rights-based rehabilitation or development. This provides scope not only to come to terms with new and unfamiliar standards but also to bring out rights that are culturally-embedded (what an-Naim [1998] terms the inductive approach to human rights in Africa). People learn that the right to development is not an externally imposed game, but one they have played all along, but without perhaps fully formalising the rules. There is now useful experience in Sierra Leone of how to access these embedded notions of redistributive justice in order, for example, to improve village rehabilitation initiatives (Archibald & Richards 2002a). A food security project in central Sierra Leone, for example, encouraged villagers to make use of rights discourse to change the way inputs were distributed. Results show gains in practical efficiency and also evidence that the poor are able both to comprehend and to demand rights in ways that potentially transform proposed patrimonial solutions to food security issues.

During our field work for this report we saw evidence of the effects of such projects on local politics. On one occasion, we participated in a village meeting in which an old woman stood up to challenge a group of village elders about a local development scheme. The scheme had been presented as pure charity by a private benefactor to increase food security. The woman, a previous participant in a rights-based initiative, it turned out, was excluded from the scheme because of lack of private capital, while the village elders were prime beneficiaries. The woman's critiques cantered on the inequities inherent in the scheme, making the point that if food security is a right for the poorest of the poor then the proposed solution was no solution at all. Embarrassed elders rushed to assure her that she would be "given food" from the abundance promised. She proudly insisted she was capable of working for herself. All she wanted was a scheme that allowed her to look after herself. This can be seen as a challenge to patrimonialism, but conversely as an example of the self-reliance the rights-based approach liberates.

For the second type of communication strategy, the role of the media is key. Workshops for journalists and broadcasters seem an important requirement. Radio has been important in African peace processes (cf. Fardon & Furniss 2001) and we envisage that it will play a similar role in communicating basic information about the MDG game. Programmes might include weekly factual up-dates on monitoring and meeting targets, and Q&A sessions involving politicians, technocrats and civil society representatives debating national strategy and the

obligations, rights and duties of various partners, including what role citizens will play (for example in helping deliver key targets through community mobilization and “self help”). A possibility to be considered by government statistics offices is that they participate in weekly call-in programs in which their experts respond to viewer questions for information about the state of the economy and the progress made in different areas towards the achievement of the goals.

#### **4.7 Define sub-national targets to reduce horizontal inequality**

Although the goals are defined in national terms, there are many different ways in which the goals can be met, with different distributive implications for different groups within a country.

Achieving the goals will necessarily imply an improvement in the welfare of poor populations within a country, but it does not put any constraints on *which* poor people gain these benefits. We recommend that in post conflict countries, *targets should be set at a local level* so that the attainment of the goals is reached in a balanced manner.<sup>x</sup>

There are a number of arguments that favour the defining of sub-national MDGs. The first argument, of great importance in post-conflict countries, focuses on the character of the outcome: achieving the MDGs *within* regions systematically reduces those inequalities *between* regions that can sometimes lead to conflict.<sup>xi</sup> The principle of producing disaggregated MDG indicators at the regional level can also be extended to producing disaggregated indicators for religious or ethnic groups, in cases where inequalities across these groupings underlie political tensions.

A second reason for employing disaggregated indicators across regions is to more closely match local political actors with their political responsibilities and more concretely translate general targets into outcomes that are meaningful to local populations.

#### **4.8 Integrate national MDG strategies with ongoing rights campaigns**

Despite the fragility and confusion associated with post-conflict situations there is a case – we suggested – to incorporate the MDGs at an early stage into the debates of civil society groups campaigning for social and economic rights (for example in campaigns for land reform, gender equality and a better deal for youth). Here, we use the case of Liberia to provide two examples of how the MDG discussion could become an important tool within such debates.

*Basic education for all:* Life in camps for the Liberian displaced has transformed the viewpoints of many villagers. If security is one of two central issues behind the slow, staged return of families to interior villages the other is social services. IDPs have experienced better education and health facilities in camps close to Monrovia than they ever experienced in the Counties before the war.

Women are especially adamant that resettlement must include education for their children. The RFTF's target of rehabilitating 25% of existing provincial schools by December 2005 seems to underestimate the likely explosion of demand for basic education once return builds from trickle to flood. It is envisaged that some (at least) of this demand will be met through community-driven development action, and the World Bank has recently provided a trust fund grant for communities to apply for funding through the newly established Liberian Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE). LACE will not work effectively unless there is widespread awareness of community level rights and responsibilities. A place to begin is in the camps. More than training in participatory development techniques is required. Education around the MDGs seems equally important. IDPs need to know that basic education for every child by 2015 is an internationally agreed commitment from which the government of Liberia is not exempted, but that there are different modalities for reaching this goal, including the modality of community action. In fact, government may not be the obvious agency to build schools. Perhaps its own responsibilities are better restricted to training and paying teachers (the 2003 Liberian MDG base line report recognised the crucial importance of rehabilitating the three provincial teacher training colleges). Establishing and running village schools may be better undertaken through parent power, for which LACE grants will be available. What villagers need to know is that they have a right to apply (and how to apply) and that LACE is not offering political favours but, as an accountable, transparent duty holder, is under obligation to facilitate progress towards a key MDG (basic education for all by 2015).

*Demobilization and youth employment.* A second case where urgent attention to the MDG debate is needed is the issue of meaningful employment opportunities for youth, especially as affecting the process of demobilization. There is widespread concern – shared by ex-combatants and other rural groups – over flaws in the Liberian demobilization process. In particular, the focus on the ex-combatant him- or herself is problematic. The benefit packages are quite large, and opportunities are traded. This results in a situation in which some ex-combatants are bounced out of their benefits, and others become frustrated because that which has been promised cannot be delivered (due, for example, to skills training bottlenecks). Locally, the point is often made that the underlying problem is 85% rural youth unemployment and that instead of focussing on ex-combatants as such, there should be a focus on skills training and job creation for all impoverished young people. Whether ex-combatants themselves revert to war is irrelevant. The country is still awash with guns, and without meaningful training and employment others will soon take their place. Thus there is already wide “ownership” in rural Liberia of an issue to which the international MDG discourse directs attention– the issue of *meaningful* employment for youth

—and if the opportunity is acted upon there is a constituency for reshaping the reintegration part of the DDR process in ways that will be more consistent with these wider concerns.

#### **4.9 Elevate Youth Policy to a National Priority**

Youths are a major factor of concern in post-conflict countries because militia forces are so much biased towards youth, and a major part of the peace process is the demobilization and social and economic reintegration of young fighters. Knowing why young people fought, and what they seek and need for reintegration is an important aspect of every peace process. But it often then becomes apparent that the fighting youth are the tip of an iceberg. The social and economic forces driving some young people into the arms of militia recruiters need to be addressed to stop further recruitment down the line. It makes no sense to disarm and resettle 70-100,000 ex-combatants (as in the case of the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone) if there are equal numbers waiting to replace them. Providing a generous resettlement package to ex-combatants without addressing the needs of the equally disadvantaged young people who never fought may do nothing more than encourage more young people to fight in the hope of gaining a resettlement package. The conclusion of several reintegration processes for ex-combatants is that the needs of the entire class of potential recruits needs to be addressed, and not just those who fought.

An MDG goal especially applicable to youth is to help young people find meaningful employment. The qualification is important. Young people above all need skills that will lead to a job, but it helps no one if the job market is flooded (with car mechanics or female garment makers). Partly because demobilization creates a logistic bottleneck (with too many young people needing skills training all at once) a seller's market for skills develops— and the ex-combatants get given what the providers are geared up to provide, not what they might need. Proper planning for the MDGs requires serious, long-term employment skills planning. Staged approaches may sometimes be better than an all at once approach. Some ex-combatants and job-seeking impoverished youths might be willing to take temporary work (such as the \$2.00/day currently offered to those willing to repair local roads in Liberia) if they also had a voucher that guaranteed a truly suitable and high quality skills training package when it becomes available in due course. Otherwise they fear being trapped in dead-end work well below their aspirations (often it turns out that young fighters were prepared to gamble with their lives for the chance of a more progressive future). In general, generic skills (such as agricultural skills, business skills, basic building skills, IT) are more important than flooding the market with specific trades. Institutional reforms in the countryside (guaranteed short-hold land tenancy schemes, loans for business start-

ups, including out-grower plantation schemes, land grants in de-gazetted forested areas, legal reform to correct abuses which bear down heavily on young people, for example, manipulation of marriage contracts to extract forced labour) may liberate sustainable employment opportunities for young people in rural areas, from where many ex-combatants in Liberia and Sierra Leone come, and stem the flow of job seekers to overcrowded and job-poor urban areas.

It is a matter of concern that in both Sierra Leone and Liberia ministries of youth tend to be seen as junior partners, with very limited funding. It is also somewhat paradoxical that where there are specific ministries for youth, gender and children, children are lumped in with gender and youth with sports, and that education and employment tend to be separate areas of ministerial responsibility. So many of the MDGs are aimed explicitly or by implication at the 5-25 age range, accounting in most African countries, not excluding Liberia and Sierra Leone, for nearly half the total population. It is for this group, female as well as male, that education, skills training and employment must be found. A more coherent, consolidated approach is required. At a minimum Ministries of Youth, where they exist, should be represented on development planning committees. The youth-poverty issue is such an important focus for African countries emerging from war that there is a case for a presidential task force networking all the relevant ministries to develop coherent across-the-board policies for the 5-25 age range, including policies on education, gender equality, reproductive health, skills, and employment.

#### **4.10 Integrate Security, Development and Rights Agendas**

There has been recent extensive policy and academic focus on the link between security, development and the protection of basic rights—the so-called “security-development-rights nexus.” The linkage is stressed in the reports of the UN High Level Panel on Threats Challenges and Change and the Millennium Project, “Investing in Development.” It is also a central focus of the UN Secretary-General report to the General Assembly “In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All” (21 March 2005).

But beyond the broad recognition of the interdependence of security, development and human rights, there is little consensus on *how* policy-making should take account of the linkages. And in particular there have been few attempts to integrate these concerns into organizational structures (the UK Global Conflict Prevention Pool is a notable exception [see <http://www.mod.uk/issues/cooperation/gcpp.htm> ]). A better integration of these sectors in post-conflict countries is critical.

In our study of Sierra Leone and Liberia, the *historical* importance of the nexus is obvious; in both cases, we argue, the devastating conflicts were in large part a result of rights-related failures

of development (e.g. widespread unemployment and impoverishment of young people, and the collapse of educational systems, especially affecting the poor in remote areas). The linkages are recognised in these countries – peace and security is one of the pillars in the Sierra Leone PRSP for example. But responses to the linkages have not been mainstreamed into development planning processes. We found for example that there had been relatively little consultation of security sector experts in the production of the MDG baseline report and targets in Sierra Leone; similarly, the individual strategies identified in the PRSP are not themselves justified or prioritized in terms of their impact on security outcomes.

The challenge for African post-conflict countries is to find a way to mainstream security concerns into development planning and practice. There are a number of ways on which security and development concerns can readily be better integrated in post conflict countries.

The first is in the management of DDR processes. At present DDR processes are developed largely independently of development planning processes. In some cases however—such as in Liberia where 5-10% of the male working age population will likely go through DDR programs—DDR provides an extraordinary opportunity to help set economic development on a new path. A far reaching strategy, not typically employed, is to use these programs to provide skills that are consistent with long run planning objectives, so that the skills provided are matched with expected employer demands 3 to 4 years down the road.

More generally, there is a need for more regular dialogue between security specialists, rights activists and those framing development policy around the MDGs. An obvious priority is to ensure that security and rights perspectives are incorporated in the deliberations of MDG planning groups. But the security-development-rights nexus should also become a focus for political debate. Parliament in Sierra Leone and the Senate in Liberia should take a lead by addressing a key theme highlighted by the UN Secretary-General, viz. how to ensure the compatibility of national security measures with human rights standards.

There is also a need to tap local concerns. Remote rural populations experienced some of the worst excesses of wartime violence and have their own agenda of security-development-rights issues. Grievances stemming from corrupted development schemes were manipulated by militia factions. Some war-affected populations think Truth and Reconciliation processes ought to address these injustices as well as focusing on abuses perpetrated by the fighters. Local informants are often clear about how to prevent recurrences, e.g. make implementers of development projects directly accountable to local stakeholders.

Liberia and Sierra Leone also have country-specific security-development-rights issues. In Sierra Leone a matter of frequent local concern is how to establish the identity and bona fides

of “floating” populations of young people associated with diamond mining (many of whom ended up in the rebel forces in the 1990s). Computer-linked national ID cards are seen as one way to address the problem. They create a sense of entitlement as well as identity. ID cards issued on disarmament were used by ex-combatants to protest mistakes or abuses in benefits distribution. A willingness to be identified as a citizen in return for access to (say) basic health or education would help convey to the larger mass of vagrant civilian youth a similar sense of belonging. In Liberia, a major problem is how to deal with the stocks of weapons outside the demobilization exercise. Specific steps are needed to limit small-arms trading (in line with the Secretary-General’s recommendations in “In larger freedom”). We recommend specific consultations with ethnic diaspora groups known to ship weapons across borders in the West African region. Involving regional traders in a “buy back” scheme might prove effective in “mopping up” supply missed by demobilization exercises.

Finally, specific attention needs to be paid to cross-border issues as part of the security-development-rights nexus. So many conflicts in Africa thrive on instability and insecurity in border regions. The conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d’Ivoire have all involved incursions and weapons supply via forest trails across unregulated borders. The thickly forested Liberia-Sierra Leone border region is home to isolated populations long marginalised from national politics in both countries (Richards et al. 2005). Improved border security and better communications needs to be linked to addressing long-standing local grievances. It is also important not to stifle local cross-border trade or family interaction while tightening up on movement of weapons or illicit diamond mining. We recommend that the border-zone security-development-rights nexus should be treated as a specific issue in meeting MDG targets in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. In the case of the Liberia-Sierra Leone border the Mano River Union secretariat should be involved in setting up inter-governmental discussions on how to treat the border region within the MDG planning framework. Liberia will also need to pursue bi-lateral discussions about border-zone security-development-rights issues with Guinea and Côte d’Ivoire.

## 5 Conclusion: NEPAD's role in African Post-Conflict Countries

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals will be especially difficult in post-conflict countries in Africa. The challenges they face, likely greater than those found anywhere else in the world, are not just economic but political. We argue in this paper that progress on the twin challenges of reaching the goals and consolidating peace will require a recognition of the social factors that fuelled these conflicts, and the crises of government that preceded them. Escaping from a vicious circle of deteriorating security and development conditions will, we argue, require deep and sustained improvements in systems of governance and administration of justice, not least at the local level, and responses to conflict risks must be mainstreamed into development strategies. These general principles, though to a certain degree extremely obvious, are not being followed, in large part because of very genuine capacity constraints, but also because of a long-standing political culture of patrimonial governance.

In response, we describe some more specific strategies that can be employed; these strategies emphasize a rights based approach to development, and they emphasize a central role for long run development planning—of a form not presently employed in the countries we have examined—coupled with an emphasis on transparency in decision-making and in the uses of government finance, and on broader and more sustained participation in political decision-making processes.

We argue throughout that the Millennium Development Goals framework provides an opportunity for countries emerging from conflict to address security and development concerns in an integrated manner. The core opportunity arising from the Millennium Development Goals lies in the responsibility of Africa's partners in development to provide the support needed to reach the goals, not as a favour, but in recognition of the basic economic rights of African citizens. The correlative responsibility of African governments is to develop an implementable (i.e. feasible, costed, effective) strategy to meet the goals. We have offered a set of proposals on how governments should change their approach to development planning in order to produce such strategies—in effect advice on how to play the MDG game.

But the strategy we propose assumes a high level of planning capacity within countries. To move from planning to implementation it will likely also require considerable lobbying capacity. Both of these aspects pose considerable challenges in post conflict countries, and both are areas where well targeted support from NEPAD could be highly effective.



To respond to the need for improved planning capacity, we urge NEPAD to establish a specialized team of experts, adept at using the costing methodology required to produce an implementable strategy. Such a team of experts, we suggest, should draw on the skills of African economists and administrators and where necessary seek support and training from the Millennium Project. The team should have expertise both in development planning, and in the security sector and human rights (specifically rights-based development methodology, cf. Goldewijk & De Gaay Fortman 1999). It should serve as a resource for facilitating the technical drafting of national strategies. But it should also clearly map out the ways in which developing planning can reduce (but also at times might exacerbate) conflict risks. We have specifically pointed out the extent to which unregulated borders are risk factors for many African countries, and the need to develop specific inter-country MDG strategies to mitigate these risks. NEPAD's continental status and its dual focus on security and development concerns places it in a particularly strong position to contribute to the mainstreaming of responses to security threats into national development strategies, and especially to take a lead on border issues as threats to achieving MDGs.

A second (and perhaps alternative) role for NEPAD is to focus on coordinating the *vetting* rather than the design of national strategies. Once national strategies have been developed at the country level there will likely be a need for coordinated lobbying to ensure the funding of these strategies. Effective lobbying will require the ability to *demonstrate* that African countries have the governance capacity to implement the strategies and that these strategies adequately address the concerns of conflict re-ignition that dominate in post conflict environments; and it will require successful collective action on the part of African governments. To achieve both of these aims we suggest that a vetting of MDG strategies be integrated into the African Peer Review mechanisms, at least for post conflict countries. The aim is to provide a framework, consistent with NEPAD's principles, for a continent-wide endorsement of national plans and a continent-wide strategy for lobbying for the support required to meet these ambitious goals.

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## Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> Conflict results in drastic rises in poverty and hunger (Goal 1) and sharp increases in child mortality (Goal 4). It is also closely linked to the spread of diseases (Goal 6) and environmental destruction (Goal 7). Sexual violence, especially against women, is a widespread war-related phenomenon. Consequences include increased prevalence of HIV/AIDS, displacement of populations, spread of other STIs, increased trafficking of women and girls and long-term health and psychological damage (Goal 3). Conflict is often associated with the decline in the provision of social services including education (Goal 2) and maternal health services (Goal 5).

<sup>ii</sup> Multiple studies now show, for example, that the health impacts of conflict continue on long after fighting stops. International Rescue Committee (2001). For further evidence on the lingering public health effects of civil wars, see Ghobarah et al 2004.

<sup>iii</sup> A version of the Fearon and Laitin model produced on African data and that accounts for agricultural dependence and diamond production and that includes a time trend, produces a path with rising chances of civil war through the 1980s, peaking around 1990. Even in this model however the estimated chances of onset do not rise above 5% for any given year.

<sup>iv</sup> In the Secretary General's report of 21 March 2005, he argues that "each developing country with extreme poverty should by 2006 adopt and begin to implement a national development strategy bold enough to meet the Millennium Development Goals targets for 2015."

<sup>v</sup> <http://www.lr.undp.org/mdg.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> In Singapore, government salaries have been tied to national GDP growth; elsewhere a share of civil servants receive large bonuses based on evaluations of exceptional performance (Mukherjee and Manning, 2000).

<sup>vii</sup> In this regard the recent call by an Angolan diplomat that provisions for improving transparency in the oil sector should be deferred until after "normalcy" has returned, indicates, we believe a failure to recognize the fundamental ways in which a lack of transparency in government can lead to conflict risks in the first place. UN IRIN News services. 1 April 2005. "Angola: 'Normalcy Before Transparency.'"

<sup>viii</sup> This attitude has an institutional dimension in both countries, stemming from a history of tense relations between coastal enclaves of Black settlers and interior peoples, grafted on to a situation in which social relations in the interior were historically strongly stratified, as between "rights holders" (in some local languages literally "the children of the chief") and various groups of unfree persons (pawns, clients and farm slaves) deemed to be without voice or rights. Those deemed civilised (kwii) in Liberia or city-dwelling educated elites in Sierra Leone sometimes presume a mission to enlighten "the illiterate poor", where listening to their legitimate complaints might be more appropriate. Breaking the barriers imposed by a "politics of elite culture" (Cohen 1980) requires the kind of listening process begun by the Governance Reform Secretariat in its sequence of chiefdom consultations in 1999-2000. This time, however, there needs to be a clear commitment to prompt follow-up to address the community grievances thus identified.

<sup>ix</sup> Some models of deliberation, such as those proposed by Ackerman and Fishkin (2004) involve presentations by experts or presentation of recorded material of political elites presenting or debating policy options.

<sup>x</sup> It is easy to confirm that achieving the goals in each one of a set of regions implies achieving the goals overall, even if different regions are at a different level on each indicator. For example if  $x_i$  is the level of some indicator in region  $i$ , and  $\alpha_i$  is the relative size of region  $i$ , with  $\sum_i \alpha_i = 1$ , then the national level of the indicator is given by  $\sum_i x_i \alpha_i$ . Reducing  $x_i$  by a fraction  $z$  in each region to  $(1-z)x_i$  results in a new national rate of  $\sum_i x_i \alpha_i (1-z) = (1-z) \sum_i x_i \alpha_i$ , which is equivalent to a reduction in  $\sum_i x_i \alpha_i$  by factor  $z$ .

<sup>xi</sup> Equiproportional reductions in indicators do not eliminate regional disparities; indeed they *preserve* the interregional ratio of indicators. They tend nonetheless to an improvement in relative *welfare* disparities. To see this in terms of the previous example, note that for two regions, 1 (a richer region) and 2 (a poorer region), with indicators  $x_1$  and  $x_2$ , and  $x_1 < x_2$ , the ratio  $x_1/x_2$  is of course equivalent to the ratio  $(1-z)x_1/(1-z)x_2$ ; however, for  $z \in (0,1)$  the ratio  $[1-(1-z)x_1]/[1-(1-z)x_2]$  is lower (and closer to 1) than the ratio  $[(1-x_1)/(1-x_2)]$ .